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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1926
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 8097
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 0111
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 9321
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 6012
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 1397
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE 6668
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL IMMEDIATE 4339

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000998

SIPDIS

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FOR WHA/AND AND WHA/USOAS - RICARDO ZUNIGA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2018
TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV OAS EC CO
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND FM DISCUSS MARCH 17 OAS MINISTERIAL

REF: STATE 25971

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield.
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The Ambassador shared the USG position regarding the March 17 Organization of American States (OAS) Ministerial with FM Araujo on March 13. Araujo said the GOC hopes the upcoming meeting will end tensions between Ecuador and Colombia, and produce agreement on an OAS regional mechanism to assess and warn of terrorist groups' cross-border activities. The GOC opposes the notion of a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission along the Colombian-Ecuadorian border. Araujo welcomed President Bush's call for Congress to move forward on the Colombian Free Trade Agreement (FTA) after the Easter recess. END SUMMARY.

UPCOMING OAS MINISTERIAL

¶2. (C) The Ambassador explained the USG approach to the March 17 OAS Consultation of Ministers to FM Fernando Araujo on March 13, noting we must address the threat to peace and stability in the region from terrorists' use of third countries as safe havens. The Ambassador emphasizing that the USG supports the GOC in the OAS process, but we have some concerns, such as international legal interpretations, that go beyond the context of the current dispute. FM Araujo said he will represent the GOC at the March 17 OAS Ministerial and hopes to consult with Deputy Secretary Negroponte prior to the meeting. He understood the USG had global interests that went beyond the narrow context of this OAS issue. Araujo explained the GOC's fundamental objective for the Ministerial is to solidify cooperation among OAS member states against terrorists, narcotraffickers, and other security threats in the hemisphere. The GOC hopes the session will end bilateral tension with Ecuador. He also sought an agreement on the creation of an OAS regional verification mechanism that would assess and warn of illegal groups' cross-border activities. Araujo said the GOC believes the politics of the regional dispute were resolved at the Santo Domingo Rio Group summit and hopes the OAS ministerial will look to the future. He would offer further apologies if necessary to achieve the GOC's goals.

OAS VISIT

¶3. (C) The Ambassador asked Araujo for his assessment of the March 10-12 OAS mission to Colombia led by OAS SYG Jose Miguel Insulza. Araujo said it was a productive visit, noting that the mission clearly wants to lay the groundwork for a positive Ministerial. Insulza asked President Uribe for ideas on how to make the Ministerial a success. Uribe outlined his thinking on an OAS verification mechanism. Araujo said the Argentine Ambassador was the only member of the OAS delegation to ask difficult or pointed questions. He criticized the U.S. and other drug consumer nations, arguing they needed to do more to combat narcotics. Araujo noted that Uribe responded that consumption in the U.S. was going down. Uribe said the GOC considers USG support for Plan Colombia to be a major contribution to efforts against narcotics, but added that the Europeans should do more. Septel provides additional information on the OAS visit.

NO TO BORDER PEACEKEEPING MISSION

¶4. (C) Araujo said the GOC considered the idea of some sort of international peacekeeping mission along the Colombian-Ecuadorian border counterproductive. The GOC does not want to turn this issue over to the UN, believing the UN should not take up an issue that is already in the hands of a regional organization, the OAS. Araujo reiterated the GOC's desire for an OAS-managed verification mechanism, but not a peacekeeping operation.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

¶5. (C) Araujo asked if President Bush's March 12 speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce meant the USG intends to send the U.S.-Colombia FTA to Congress soon. The Ambassador noted that the President's words spoke for themselves. He had signaled his intent to move ahead after the Easter recess. Araujo said GOC welcomes that, even in light of the Speaker's cautionary announcement following the President's speech. Araujo said in a perfect world, the GOC wished the FTA would be considered and approved solely on economic and commercial grounds. Still, he understood the political utility in the United States of including the national security context when arguing in support of the FTA. Brownfield

=====CABLE ENDS=====